

**SELECTED AIRCRAFT FLOWN BY the  
67TH RECONNAISSANCE WING  
and  
67TH TACTICAL RECONNAISSANCE WING**

**History Office  
67th Network Warfare Wing**

### ***Aircraft: B/RB-26, 1947-1949; RB-26, 1951-1957***

The RB-26 was a reconnaissance conversion of the Douglas B-26. When the Korean War began in June 1950, the 3rd Bomb Group (Light) was equipped with B-26Bs and stationed in Japan. This group had only two bomb squadrons initially (8th and 13th), but was pressed into immediate service, first covering the evacuation of U.S. citizens from South Korea in the first few days of the war and later in the interdiction mission.

The B-26Bs were first used to attack North Korean ground targets such as truck convoys, trains, rail lines, and bridges in daylight and achieved significant results. As the losses to B-26 interdiction raids became unacceptable, North Korea started moving supplies primarily at night.

Limited numbers of B-26Bs and B-26Cs were converted for use as reconnaissance aircraft. The gun turrets were removed and the bomb bay adapted to carry additional equipment depending on the intended mission. During the first year of the war, RB-26s flew 2,305 effective sorties. The RB-26 retained a limited offensive weapons capability when rockets or bombs were loaded on wing racks and during the first year of the war, 342 tons of bombs were dropped and 120 rockets were fired.

Because there were no preexisting tactics for night intruder (interdiction) missions, various techniques were tried, some involving RB-26s and B-26Bs in hunter-killer pairs. The reconnaissance aircraft would seek targets and would drop parachute flares to mark the location and call the B-26B to attack. This technique didn't work very well since the ground targets usually moved away from the area illuminated by the flare.

Other techniques tried included adding a seven-million candlepower searchlight to the aircraft. The aircraft with the light was accompanied by one or more attack aircraft and would light a target area for a short time. There were two major drawbacks to this plan: first, the searchlight made an excellent target for enemy gunners and second, the light had a very limited time of operation (less than a minute).

Eventually, night interdiction tactics evolved so the RB-26 was not needed. The last U.S. air mission of the Korean War was flown by an RB-26 just a few minutes before the ceasefire.

The RB-26 remained in service into the mid-1950s when it began to be replaced by more advanced jet-powered reconnaissance aircraft like the RB-57A and RB-66B.

*Source: National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RF-51 Mustang, 1951-1953***

The P-51 destroyed more enemy aircraft than any other fighter in Europe during World War II. It began as the NA-73 in 1940 at Britain's request. The design showed promise and the Army Air Forces purchases of Allison-powered Mustangs began in 1941 primarily for photo reconnaissance and ground support use due to its limited high-altitude performance. In December 1943, Merlin-powered P-51Bs first entered combat over Europe. Providing high-altitude escort to B-17s and B-24s, they scored heavily over German interceptors and by war's end, P-51s had destroyed 4,950 enemy aircraft in the air.

In 1948, the "P" for pursuit designation was changed to "F" for fighter. During the Korean War, the F-51 Mustang was in action once again. It was better suited to the small airstrips of Korea. The aircraft were based at Kimpo, Pusan and Pohang, flying out of one field then another in close support operations against the advancing North Koreans since the jet aircraft of the day did not have enough range to permit sufficient loiter time over the target. The "RF" version flew photo-reconnaissance missions. The aircraft were withdrawn from combat in 1953.

Today many P-51s have been restored to the former glory and are on display in various aviation museums.

#### **General Characteristics:**

Primary function: fighter

Builder: North American

Span: 37 feet

Length: 32 feet 3 inches

Height: 13 feet 8 inches

Weight: 12,100 pounds max.

Armament: Six .50-cal. machine guns and 10 5-inch rockets or 2,000 pounds of bombs

Engine: Packard built Rolls-Royce "Merlin" V-1650 r

Cost: \$54,000

Maximum speed: 437 mph

Cruising speed: 275 mph

Range: 1,000 miles

*Sources compiled: Air Force History Support Office and National Museum of the Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RF-86 Sabre, 1951-1956***

The F-86 Sabre, originally built as a day fighter, was first modified for reconnaissance during the Korean War. It was the idea of three officers from the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing at Kimpo Air Base, Korea.

The officers found there really wasn't much room for a camera, but by removing two of the 12.7-millimeter guns and the ammo boxes from the right side of the fuselage, they were able to squeeze in a K-25 bomb-scoring camera. The camera was mounted horizontally but "shot" out the bottom using mirrors.

Col. Edwin "Chick" Chickering of the 67th TRW liked the idea and scrounged up two F-86As, which were sent to Japan to be refitted with the K-25 camera. About a dozen F-86 fighters (known as "Honeybuckets" or "Ashtrays") were custom-fitted with cameras to replace the RF-80 for missions in North Korea -- "MiG Alley."



After the Korean War, a handful of F-86Fs received more capable cameras under Project Haymaker. In order to fit the film magazines for the vertically mounted cameras, the aircraft acquired a distinctive bulge on both sides of the forward fuselage. The armament was removed to allow for the cameras, and the RF-86F "Haymakers" had painted-on gun ports to appear as if they were armed.

In March 1954 the 15th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron deployed to Komaki Air Base, Japan, receiving eight newly-modified "Haymakers." With these aircraft, they secretly overflew Soviet, North Korean and communist Chinese territory in the mid-1950s. The missions were approved at the presidential level..

#### **General Characteristics**

Engine: 5,910-lbs. thrust J47-GE-27 jet engine

Maximum speed: Approx. 650 mph

Range: Approx. 1,900 miles

Ceiling: 54,000 ft.

*Sources compiled: Air Force History Support Office and National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RF-84 Thunderflash, 1955-1958***

The first of the modern jets to be designed specifically for photo-reconnaissance, the Thunderflash was the first reconnaissance airplane equipped with a combination of standard aerial cameras and dicing camera for close-up photos of individual targets.

It was also the first fighter-type aircraft to be equipped with the Tri-Metrogon camera which could take horizon-to-horizon pictures. Unlike the Thunderstreak, the Thunderflash had its air-intake ducts located in the wing roots rather than the nose, which was elongated and enclosed to permit installation of a sweeping variety of camera and electronic equipment.

It was the first reconnaissance fighter to have a camera control system and a viewfinder for the pilot, who also acted as the cameraman. The aircraft was first tested in February 1952, and 715 of the aircraft were produced.



#### **General Characteristics**

Span: 33 ft. 6 in.

Length: 47 ft. 6 in.

Height: 15 ft. 0 in.

Weight: 25,390 lbs. maximum takeoff

Armament: Four .50-cal. machine guns mounted in the wings

Engine: Wright "Sapphire" J-65-W-7 of 7,800 lbs. thrust

Crew: One

Maximum speed: 629 mph

Cruising speed: 542 mph

Range: 2,000 miles

Service ceiling: 39,390 ft.

*Source compiled from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RB-66, 1956-1960***

The RB-66B "Destroyer" was the production version of the RB-66A. Designed for the tactical reconnaissance mission, the aircraft carried a variety of cameras including the K38 day camera and K46 night camera, which was used with the photoflash bombs carried in the bomb bay.

The RB-66B reconnaissance version was the first production series and totaled 145 of the 294 B-66 built. The B-66 was the last tactical bomber built for the Air Force, and only the B-66B was designed exclusively as a bomber. Others served as tactical reconnaissance aircraft while the final version, the WB-66D, was designed for electronic weather reconnaissance.



Some RB-66Bs were modified for service in Vietnam as electronic countermeasures aircraft to confuse enemy radar defenses. These aircraft were, in some cases, redesignated EB-66B. Other aircraft underwent more extensive conversion and became EB-66Es.

#### **General Characteristics**

Span: 72 ft. 6 in.

Length: 75 ft. 2 in.

Height: 23 ft. 7 in.

Weight: 91,000 lbs. maximum take off weight

Armament: Two 20mm cannons in tail barbette plus 8,044 lbs. of photoflash bombs

Engines: Two Allison J71-A-11 turbojets of 10,200 lbs. thrust each

Crew: Three (pilot, copilot/bombardier, navigator/gunner)

Maximum speed: 585 mph

Cruising speed: 525 mph

Range: 1,800 miles

Service ceiling: 43,000 ft.

*Source compiled from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RB/KB-50, 1957-1960***

All but one of the Boeing B-50Bs built were modified for photo reconnaissance, weather data gathering and observation missions. These converted aircraft were redesignated RB-50B. In addition to the changes necessary for the nine reconnaissance cameras installed at four stations, the RB-50Bs were modified to accept two 700-gallon auxiliary fuel tanks.

These tanks were mounted on pylons on the outboard wings and could be dropped in flight in necessary. The aircraft were also capable of in-flight refueling using the early British-type system. The No. 2 bomb bay (aft) was modified to hold a crew capsule for the extra crewmen operating the reconnaissance equipment.



#### **General Characteristics (standard B-50B):**

**Span:** 141 ft. 3 in.

**Length:** 99 ft. 0 in.

**Height:** 32 ft. 8 in.

**Weight:** 170,400 lbs. (maximum takeoff weight)

**Armament:** 12 .50-cal. machine guns, one 20 mm cannon and 20,000 lbs. of bombs; RB-50Bs usually carried only photoflash bombs in the forward bomb bay

**Engines:** Four Pratt & Whitney R-4360-35 Wasp Major turbo-supercharged radials of 3,500 hp each

**Crew:** 10 or 11 normally [pilot, copilot, flight engineer, navigator, bombardier, radar operator, radio operator and four gunners (top, tail, left and right)]; RB-50Bs had additional crewmen (photo technicians) in a bomb bay mounted crew module

**Maximum speed:** 385 mph at 25,000 ft. and combat weight of 121,700 lbs.

**Cruising speed:** 235 mph

**Range:** 4,650 miles with 10,000-lb. bomb load; 5,270 miles maximum ferry range

**Service ceiling:** 37,000 ft.

*Source compiled from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RB-57 "Canberra," 1957-1960***

The Martin RB-57A was designed as a reconnaissance version of the B-57A, which could be converted to the bomber role if necessary. The RB-57A was almost identical to the B-57A externally; most of the changes were internal. The addition of camera equipment aft of the bomb bay and the necessary electronics to operate them were the most notable difference between the two A model versions.

The USAF received 67 RB-57As during 1953 and 1954. Originally, 99 aircraft were ordered; however, the order was reduced by a third because of the expected delivery of the more capable Douglas RB-66B anticipated by mid-1954.

After withdrawal from USAF reconnaissance units, some RB-57As were converted to electronic reconnaissance aircraft and redesignated EB-57. Most of the others were assigned to Air National Guard units. Later still, some aircraft were converted to RB-57F.



#### **General Characteristics:**

**Span:** 64 ft. 0 in. (without tip tanks)

**Length:** 65 ft. 6 in.

**Height:** 15 ft. 7 in.

**Weight:** 51,000 lbs. maximum takeoff weight

**Armament:** None for reconnaissance mission, although aircraft were designed to be converted to the bomber role if necessary

**Engines:** Two Wright J65-W-5 turbojets of 7,200 lbs. static thrust each **Crew:** Two (pilot and navigator-photographer)

**Maximum speed:** 600 mph at 45,000 ft.

**Cruising speed:** 530 mph

**Combat radius:** Approx. 1,250 miles

**Range:** Approx. 2,650 miles maximum ferry range

**Service ceiling:** 48,000 ft.

*Source compiled from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*



## ***Aircraft: RF-101 Voodoo, 1958-1960***

Developed from the XF-88 penetration fighter, the F-101 originally was designed as a long-range bomber escort for the Strategic Air Command. However, when high-speed, high-altitude jet bombers such as the B-52 entered active service, escort fighters were not needed. Before production began, the F-101 design was changed to fill both tactical and air defense roles.

The F-101 made its first flight on Sept. 29, 1954. The first production F-101A became operational in May 1957, followed by the F-101C in September 1957 and the F-101B in January 1959. By the time F-101 production ended in March 1961, McDonnell had built 785 Voodoos including 480 F-101Bs, the two-seat, all-weather interceptor used by the Air Defense Command. In the reconnaissance versions, the Voodoo was the world's first supersonic photo-recon aircraft. RF-101s were used widely for low-altitude photo coverage of missile sites during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and during the late 1960s in Southeast Asia. Attack fighter, interceptor and reconnaissance versions served with the U.S. Strategic Air Defense and Tactical Air Commands and in Canada. The multimission F-101 Voodoo was used by all three U.S. Air Force Commands -- Strategic, Tactical and Air Defense. The last Voodoo retired in 1986.



### **General Characteristics**

Primary function: fighter, reconnaissance

Span: 39 feet 8 inches

Length: 71 feet 1 inches

Height: 18 feet

Weight: 52,400 pounds max.

Armament: Two AIR-2A rockets plus two AIM-4 guided missiles

Engines: Two Pratt & Whitney J57-P-55s of 16,900 pounds thrust each (with afterburner)

Crew: Two

Cost: \$1,819,000

Maximum speed: 1,095 mph

Cruising speed: 545 mph

Range: 1,754 miles

Service ceiling: 52,100 feet

*Source compiled from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*

### ***Aircraft: RF-4 Phantom II, 1966-1992***

In the early 1960s, the USAF recognized the need for more tactical reconnaissance aircraft to reinforce the RF-101s then in service. The Air Force chose a modification of the F-4C fighter. The RF-4C development program began in 1962, and the first production aircraft made its initial flight on May 18, 1964. The Air Force officially accepted a total of 499 RF-4Cs.

The RF-4C can carry a variety of cameras in three different stations in its nose section. It could take photos at both high and low altitude, day or night. The RF-4C carried no offensive armament, although during the last few years of its service some were fitted with four AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles for defense.



The 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron became the first operational unit to fly the RF-4C. In October 1965 that unit deployed to Southeast Asia to provide photographic reconnaissance of the growing conflict in South Vietnam. In the following years, RF-4Cs flew reconnaissance missions around the world, including Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Iraq in 1990-1991. The Air Force retired all of its RF-4Cs by 1985.

#### **General Characteristics**

Armament: None. Some later equipped with four sidewinder missiles  
Engines: Two General Electric J79-GE-15s of 17,000 lbs. thrust each  
Maximum speed: 1,384 mph  
Range: 1,632 miles without aerial refueling  
Ceiling: 55,200 ft  
Span: 38 ft. 5 in.  
Length: 62 ft. 10 in.  
Height: 16 ft. 6 in.

*Source compiled from the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force*